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Journal of the Muscogee Genealogical Society

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In Memoriam

Pat Hurst Jordan



COLUMBUS STATE
UNIVERSITY

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From the Editor

In this issue of *Muscogiana*, we present three historic articles and a comprehensive index of all articles in the 23-year history of this journal. The historic articles each differ in their region and time frame. All are written by historians and educators who are well known to our readers and have been active in their fields for many years.

In our lead article, Dr. Virginia Causey examines specific elements of 1930s – 1950s Columbus that surface in Carson McCullers' writings. Dr. Causey is a professor of history at Columbus State University. Our second article is by Kenneth H. Thomas Jr., whose credentials are extensive and include having been the State Historian for the Georgia Historic Preservation Division. Mr. Thomas has deep ancestral roots in Columbus, going back to 1836, and is the author of several books, including *Images of America: Fort Benning*. The third article is by Mike Bunn, Executive Director of the Historic Chattahoochee Commission and formerly the Curator of History for the Columbus Museum. His article is the first installment of a two-part article about one of the greatest Indian capitol in the south-east U.S. It may come as a surprise to most that this little known site is located within sight of what is now Columbus. Finally, the index was compiled by MGS member Dan Olds, with the assistance of Callie B. McGinnis, Rebecca V. Thomas and Jeffrey D. Olds, Dan's son. Dan is also responsible for compiling the cumulative surname index for *Muscogiana*, which appears on the Society's webpage.

On myself, I am Edward Howard, new editor of *Muscogiana*. I have a M.A. in Historic Preservation from Georgia State University and a B.S. in Education from Columbus State University. I have lived in Columbus since 1988 (with the exception of 5 years) and am a Historic Preservation Specialist at Fort Benning. Historic research and writing has always been my passion, and relating to that, most of the aforementioned contributors are no strangers to me. They have served as my teachers, mentors and collaborators in research projects and formal education over the past several years. I am humbled to accept the position of editor of *Muscogiana* and hope you will enjoy this edition.

Edward Howard

On the cover: The photograph is of 26-year-old Carson McCullers, seated at her typewriter in her childhood home on Stark Ave. The date was in August 1943. Her house is now Columbus State University's Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians. Columbus's influence on young Carson made a lasting impression and is evident in her writings. Her story begins on page 1. *Muscogiana* is grateful to the Carson McCullers Center for allowing use of the photo.

CARSON MCCULLERS' COLUMBUS: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

by Virginia Causey

Carson McCullers grew up in Columbus, Georgia, in the 1920s and early 1930s, but fled for New York City as soon as she could at age 17. Though she never lived in Columbus again, she frequently visited, to the puzzlement of her New York set. In 1949, when a friend expressed surprise that she was going to Georgia for a visit, McCullers answered, "I must go home periodically to renew my sense of horror."¹ McCullers' home town provided both physical and thematic context for her work. Her writing drew on specific Columbus settings, but, more importantly, local themes of gender, social class, and race influenced McCullers' world view.

Columbus's downtown shows up in McCullers' novels and stories. As Frankie walks on the main street in *The Member of the Wedding*, she sees "the same brick stores, about four blocks of them, the big white bank, and in the distance the many-windowed cotton mill. The wide street was divided by a narrow aisle of grass on either side of which the cars drove slowly in a browsing way."² The "white bank" is a cast-iron building originally built for a fire insurance company.



Downtown Columbus in the 1920s

Early in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, McCullers describes the town where Singer and Antonapoulos lived. The town, with its hot summers and short winters "was a fairly large one. On the main street there were several blocks of two-and three-story shops and business offices. But the largest



The white iron bank

¹ Virginia Spencer Carr, ed., "Introduction," in *Collected Stories of Carson McCullers* (Boston) Houghton Mifflin, 1987), viii.

² Carson McCullers, "The Member of the Wedding," in *Collected Stories of Carson McCullers*, 302.

buildings in the town were the factories, which employed a large percentage of the population. These cotton mills were big and flourishing. . . ."³



The Eagle & Phenix, Columbus' largest textile mill

In *The Member of the Wedding*, Frankie walks along the street just west of Broadway and along the river: "Front Avenue was a street that had always drawn her, although it had the sorriest, smallest stores in town. On the left side of the street there were warehouses, and in between were glimpses of brown river and green trees." Columbus until recently has been dominated by cotton. By the early twentieth century, the Eagle & Phenix Mill employed 65% of all workers in the city, and most of the rest either worked in mills or in industries related to cotton production. Textiles accounted for more than 90% of all goods Columbus produced.⁴ Those warehouses Frankie sees along Front Avenue housed bales to be used in one of the many local mills or to be shipped down the Chattahoochee River and eventually to mills in the North or in England.

Soldiers play an important role in *The Member of the Wedding*, published in 1946, and they were (and are) prominent in Columbus as well. Fort Benning, just south of the city, became a beehive of activity during World War II, a major staging area for sending troops overseas. From 1939

³ McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1940), 4.

⁴ John S. Lupold, *Columbus, Georgia, 1828-1978* (Columbus Sesquicentennial, Inc., 1978).

to 1946, more than 600,000 soldiers trained at Fort Benning.⁵ McCullers writes, “. . . Toward evening, or on holidays, the street would fill up with the soldiers who came from the camp nine miles away. They seemed to prefer Front Avenue to almost any other street, and sometimes the pavement resembled a flowing river of brown soldiers. They came to town on holidays and went around in glad, loud gangs together, or walked the sidewalks with grown girls.”⁶ Though Frankie envies the girls with the soldiers, this fraternization was every Columbus mama and daddy’s nightmare. Fort Benning gave Columbus the nickname “Mother-in-law of the



Army” because of all the soldiers who married local girls. McCullers’ cousin said she once commented that Fort Benning took care of some mighty hard cases among Columbus girls.

So, clearly, the physical setting of Columbus provided a backdrop for McCullers’ work. But the metaphysical landscape was more important, especially in dealing with gender, social class, and race. Gender issues figure prominently in McCullers’ writing. Women suffocate in traditional roles or suffer as outcasts if they defy them.⁷ A case study in Columbus history illustrates this dilemma. Augusta Howard was born into one of the most blue-blooded of the First Columbus Families at the end of the Civil War, but she was cursed to be an independent thinker. She was a vegetarian and an atheist. She dabbled in spiritualism, occasionally wore trousers, never married, and worked for women’s rights—obviously an “unnatural” woman. In 1890 at the age of 25 she founded the Georgia Woman

⁵ Sharon Kane and Richard Keaton, *Fort Benning: The Land and the People* (Fort Benning: U.S. Army Infantry Center, 1994), <http://www.nps.gov/seac/benning-book/ch22.htm>.

⁶ McCullers, “The Member of the Wedding,” 303.

⁷ Mick Kelly in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and Miss Amelia Evans in *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, for example. See Jacqueline R. Pierce, “The Virgin Ogre: Subverted Southern Belles in O’Connor and McCullers,” http://www.lsc.edu/faculty/jacklyn_r_pierce/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.asp (accessed January 20, 2011).

Suffrage Association, even bringing the great Susan B. Anthony to Columbus to visit in 1895. But during her visit, Anthony sensed tragedy lurking. She wrote in her diary, "Over this dear conscientious family hangs a heavy cloud—a sadness reigns over the house. . . ."⁸

Augusta's two brothers, aghast at her "notoriety," immediately set about constraining her, easy to do because they controlled the purse strings. Augusta disappeared from the suffrage movement and the public record. By 1920 she lived alone in the decrepit family mansion



Sherwood Hall in the midst of wildly overgrown grounds, feeling betrayed by her family, much like Miss Amelia in *The Ballad of the Sad Café* after the departure of Cousin Lyman and Marvin Macy. Apparently, workers from the adjacent cotton mill village frequently trespassed on the mansion's grounds, infuriating Augusta. On May 20, 1920, she heard male voices in the big magnolia tree near the house. She grabbed her pistol, went outside and ordered them to come down. No answer. Augusta fired up into the tree (as a warning, she later said). A young boy screamed, hit in the abdomen. Augusta helped him down, apparently lectured him about her private property rights, and sent him away. A passerby found him crawling in the road, trying to get home, and took him to the hospital where he hovered between life and death for three weeks. The sheriff arrested Augusta the afternoon of the shooting and held her in the city jail. When it was clear the child would live,

⁸ Susan B. Anthony diary, February 8, 1895. Susan B. Anthony Papers, Library of Congress, MSS 11049, Microfilm, Reel 3.

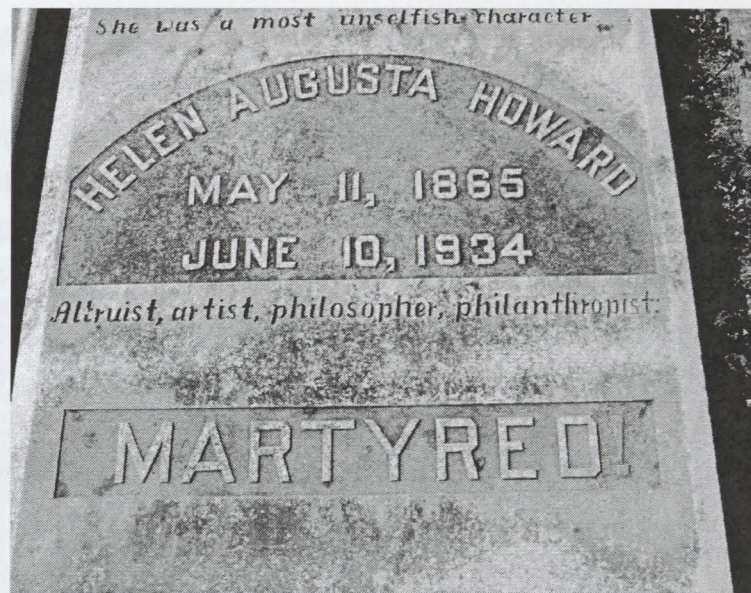
Augusta was brought to trial. In her defense, she made a three-hour rambling paranoid speech in which she evoked class principles, often mentioning her lofty lineage. She also referred to "my . . . practical outlawry," claiming to have been persecuted during the past twenty-five years for her radical activities, forced into becoming a "hermit." Her defense in shooting the boy was "one's house is one's castle." She asserted, "I ethically am the plaintiff in the case, only technically the defendant. . . the boy's blood is not on my hands but on the hands of his parents who failed to train him properly. . . ." The jury of white men was unsympathetic. They convicted her; the judge sentenced her to a year in prison. Horrified at the scandal, her brothers appealed to the governor for clemency on the grounds that Augusta was mentally unbalanced. Augusta vigorously fought this effort, but the Howard brothers submitted letters of support for this claim from many prominent Columbus citizens, most of whom did not know Augusta personally. Letters from her personal acquaintances, including McCullers' father Lamar Smith, stressed her culture and lineage, her intelligence and humanity. The trial judge was more impressed by the important men who allied with the Howard brothers. He recommended a pardon, writing, "I was convinced that she did not possess a normal mind." On December 2, 1921, Gov. Thomas Hardwick pardoned Augusta. Her brothers quickly packed her up and exiled her to New York City where she lived until her death in 1934.⁹

Imagine Augusta, like Miss Amelia, "let[ting] her hair grow ragged . . . and the great muscles of her body [shrinking] until she was as thin as old maids are thin when they go crazy."¹⁰ As one McCullers scholar commented, "To fail at what one's society expects of women in life is to end up alone, broken, crazy, and tragic."¹¹ The final word on Augusta's grave marker in Linwood Cemetery in Columbus is "Martyred!," the fate of an independent female in the early twentieth century South. It's a good thing McCullers escaped when she did.

⁹ *The State of Georgia vs. Augusta Howard*, November term, 1920 of Muscogee Superior Court; Richard's Howard, application for pardon from Hon. Thomas Hardwick, Governor, and the Prison Commissioners of Georgia; and Application for Executive Clemency, Office of the Prison Commission of Georgia, Dec. 2, 1921. All located in Governor, Convict and Fugitive Records—Applications for Clemency, 1858-1942, RCB 10000, C 180977, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Morrow, Georgia.

¹⁰ McCullers, "The Ballad of the Sad Café," in *Collected Stories of Carson McCullers*, 252.

¹¹ Pierce, 9.



McCullers gives much attention to social class issues in her novels. In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Mick attends the Industrial High School, not the elite college preparatory school McCullers attended. Columbus proudly claims to be the first school system in the country with a publicly-funded industrial/vocational school. It's interesting to note, though, that the man who gave the biggest chunk of money to fund this school, G. Gunby Jordan, was a cotton mill owner who expected the school to turn out workers for his factory.¹² McCullers notes that "most of the workers in town were very poor. Often in the faces along the streets there was the desperate look of hunger and of loneliness"¹³ In *The Member of the Wedding*, poverty is evident as Frankie wanders "the gray crooked streets of the mill section, . . . among the choking dust and sad gray rotten shacks,"¹⁴ walking in a neighborhood Columbus called "Boogerville." Many millworkers lived in shotgun houses such as these.

¹² Carleton Gibson, "The Secondary Industrial School of Columbus, Georgia." *Annals of the American Academy*, January 1909, 42. Georgia Room, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia. Gibson was superintendent of Columbus schools. The "public-spirited citizen" mentioned who donated the land was Jordan.

¹³ McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, 4.

¹⁴ McCullers, "The Member of the Wedding," 308.



Jake Blount in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is McCullers' most outspoken character on social class issues. He rails to three millworkers, "The bastards who own these mills are millionaires. While the doffers and carders and all the people behind the machines who spin and weave the cloth can't hardly make enough to keep their guts quiet. . . . When you walk around the streets and. . . see hungry worn-out people and ricket-legged young-uns, don't it make you mad?" He learned there was an unsuccessful strike in the town six years ago.¹⁵ This was the largest strike in U.S. history, the General Textile Strike of 1934 which exploded just about the time McCullers left for New York. More than 10,000 Columbus workers walked out of the mills in September. The strike was short and violent. Across Georgia, at least six people died, including a worker in Columbus. After pledging in his re-election campaign that he would never use force against strikers, Georgia governor Eugene Talmadge declared martial law at the urging of the mill owners. He sent in the National Guard to arrest striking workers and held them in a barbed wire "concentration camp" at Fort McPherson in Atlanta. After 22 days, the union's effort collapsed. Mill owners fired union members from Columbus mills and blacklisted them to prevent their working in any Southern mill.¹⁶

¹⁵ McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, 56-57.

¹⁶ "Textile Mills Fail to Open in City Today," *Columbus Ledger*, Sept. 5, 1934; "W.R. Sanders Dies at Hospital," *Columbus Ledger*, August 11, 1934; John A. Salmond, *The General Strike of 1934: From Maine to Alabama* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002).



SPOT MARKET

Wheat	1.10
Corn	1.00
Soybeans	1.20
Flour	1.50
Wool	1.80
Aluminum	1.90
Steel	2.00

The Columbus Enquirer-Sun

MEMBER ASSOCIATED PRESS ESTABLISHED 1928

CL. XCI.—NO. 159 COLUMBUS, GEORGIA, THURSDAY MORNING, MAY 22, 1919. 60 CENTS PER MONTH

SEVEN ARE SHOT IN LABOR RIOT HERE

Widely Divergent Courses of American and British Aviators

WEEK OF GRACE GRANTED TEUTS TO MAKE KICKS

German Plenipotentiaries Must Make Full Reply to Allies by 25th of May.

AMERICAN EXPERTS TAKE RESIGNATIONS

Resignations of Some Subordinates Are Reported to Have Been Tendered to the Director of Experts Out of His Board.

Broken line shows flight completed by one United States army plane. Double line shows proposed continuation of the American flight. Dotted line shows the course of Harry G. Hendley, the Australian aviator. All distances indicated are in statute miles.

Nonunion Operatives Fire on Meeting of United Mill Workers

Attempt to Break Up Meeting With Hoots and Jeers Reaches Bloody Climax When Disorganizers Shoot Into Assembly

Will Recommend Many Airplanes for U. S. Navy

(By Associated Press.)

Washington, May 21.—Construction of a fleet of seaplane carriers of the type for the U. S. Navy, as the director of the American navy.

Assaultant Makes Another Attempt on Talbot's Life

(By Associated Press.)

Wash. Spec. Tel. May 21.—John W. Talbot, assistant president of the National Union of Iron, is in a serious condition, as a result of an assault made on him last night.

\$750,000 FIRE AT MOBILE FROM PILE OF TRASH

Twenty Blocks of some of the

Although admittedly a hopeless case when he was sent to the city hospital with a bullet wound in his head, physicians did everything in their power to save the life of Condy Tucker, but to no avail, he died at 1:15 o'clock this morning.

Seven persons were wounded, two seriously, last night when a crowd of non-union textile workers, estimated at one hundred, opened fire from ambush upon a gathering of union textile workers assembled in front of Foster's store at the corner of Thirty-second street and Second avenue listening to a speech being made by Organizer John Thomas, of the local textile union.

The power of the textile bosses was nothing new in Columbus. At a night-time rally during a 1919 strike, the owners of the Swift and Bibb mills secretly stationed snipers with pistols and semi-automatic weapons on the roofs of the mill buildings surrounding the meeting. At a given signal, the company men opened fire, killing one worker and wounding six, including permanently crippling a 12-year-old bystander. After several minutes of "wholesale shooting," the owners ordered the city electricity cut off at the mill's powerhouse, plunging the panicked crowd in darkness and allowing the shooters to escape. A reporter at the scene wrote that it was "the nearest thing to a battle here in years."¹⁷

¹⁷Columbus Ledger, May 22, 1918; Frank J. Byrne, "Wartime Agitation and Postwar Repression: Rev. John A. McCallan and the Columbus Strikes of 1918-1919." *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 81, 2 (1997).

8

Through the early twentieth century, Columbus leaders bragged that local workers were happy, docile, and uninterested in unions. Mill owner W.C. Bradley of the Eagle & Phenix and Bibb Mills declared to a federal official that he would not hire union workers, that he "would discharge every official of the Union found on his plant, or anyone, man or woman, who was active for the Union. . . ."¹⁸ Indeed, as might be expected, unions made little headway in Columbus through the twentieth century. McCullers would have absorbed this class conflict in Columbus through her pores.

A final major theme of McCullers' work reflected through the prism of her home town is race. Columbus operated under a racial caste system during McCullers' lifetime. At its most benevolent, the system permitted African Americans to go about their separate lives relatively unmolested. More often, they were humiliated by daily confrontations that fixed their "place"—grown men and women called "boy" and "girl"; forced to give way to whites on public sidewalks; sitting in the back of the bus or in the filthy balcony at the theatre; drinking from tepid "colored" water fountains when whites had iced water; even if educated professionals, having to cast down their eyes and speak in subservient tones to any white—suffering the consequences if they didn't, as with Dr. Copeland's beating by deputies in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*. They lived in segregated neighborhoods and often in substandard housing. In *The Member of the Wedding*, Frankie wandered through the African American neighborhood Columbus called "The Bottoms." Situated on low-lying land that whites did not want, it was conveniently located just down the hill from the elite neighborhood of Wynnton where McCullers grew up. African American domestics and yard men were within hailing distance of their white employers. McCullers describes "The Bottoms": "Here were the same two-room shacks and rotted privies, as in the mill section. . . [Frankie] found herself remembering these familiar lanes in long-past times and other weathers—the ice-pale mornings in the wintertime when even the orange fires under the black iron pots of washwomen seemed to be shivering, the windy autumn nights."

¹⁸ Board of Trade of Columbus, Georgia, *Columbus, Georgia: The Place with the Power and the Push*, n.d. [1913]. Georgia Room, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia; National War Labor Relations Board, Case Files, 1918-19, August 21, 1918. National Records Administration, Washington, D.C.



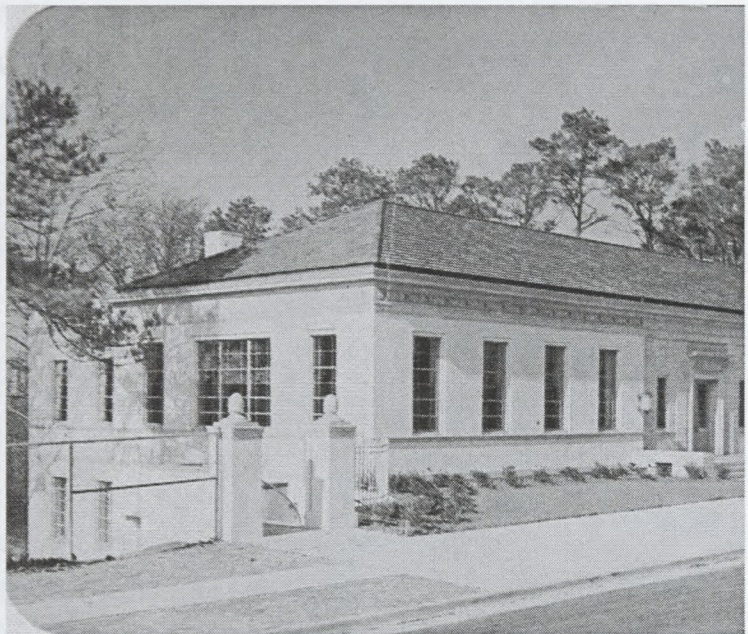
"The Bottoms" in the 1950s

At its worst, the caste system condoned racial violence. A white Columbus mob in 1896 seized two African American accused rapists from the jail, hanged them from oak trees in the median of Broadway, and riddled the bodies with bullets. A coroner's jury quickly issued a ruling that the men died "at the hands of parties unknown." The bodies hung in plain view on Broadway for a full day, a warning to other African Americans. In 1912, a mob stormed the courthouse to seize a teenaged black boy convicted of the accidental shooting of the 12-year-old son of a prominent white family. They commandeered a street car and took him just outside the city limits where he was shot repeatedly and left in a ditch by the trolley tracks for a day. In 1930, after a white woman was raped just outside of town, three black men—none the rapist—were lynched by a Ku Klux Klan mob.¹⁹

¹⁹ Billy Winn, "Lynching and Racial Violence in Columbus," speech delivered at the Columbus Public Library on May 3, 2007; Winn, "Lynching on Wynn's Hill," *Southern Exposure* 15, no. 3/4 (1987): 17-24.



KKK cross-burning in
Columbus in 1956



The Bradley Public Library

McCullers well understood Columbus' racial dynamic. In 1948 she learned that the new public library was going to be segregated, and she wrote to the local paper, "Always it has been an intolerable shame to me to know that Negroes are not accorded the same intellectual privileges as white citizens. As an author, represented in the library, I feel it is my duty to speak not only for myself but for the august dead who are represented on the shelves and to whom I owe an incalculable debt. . . . I would like to go on record and like to say that we owe to these (the molders of the conscience of our civilization) the freedom of all citizens regardless of race, to benefit by their wisdom, which is our dearest inheritance." The library ignored McCullers' plea and opened as a white-only facility. Proving the limitations of institutional memory, a decade later the directors approached McCullers to deposit her manuscripts in the library's collection. She replied that she would if the library was "truly a public one" and would be opened to all citizens. The library declined and so did she.²⁰

McCullers' ability to empathize with African American characters gained her the admiration of white and black critics. In his review of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, African American author Richard Wright marveled at "the astonishing humanity that enables a white writer, for the first time in Southern fiction, to handle Negro characters with as much ease and justice as those of her own

²⁰ McCullers letter to the editor of the *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*, February 26, 1948; McCullers letter to The Director of the Columbus Public Library, August 21, 1958, Box 24, folder 2, Carson McCullers Collection, Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas.

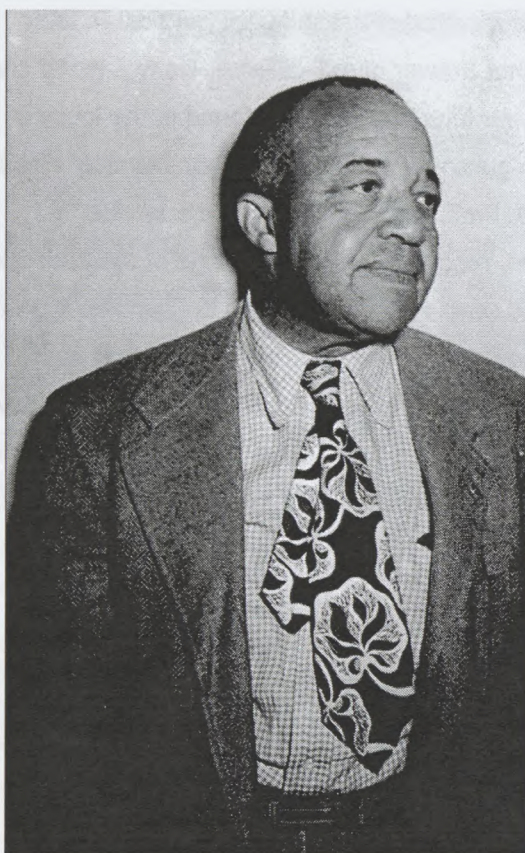
race."²¹ Some of McCullers' black characters acquiesce to the caste system, following the advice of Dr. Benedict Mady Copeland's daughter Portia: "Best thing us can do is keep our mouth shut and wait." But not Dr. Copeland, who feels the weighty responsibility to "uplift his people," a common theme for black professionals in the first half of the twentieth century. Dr. Copeland decries the condition of his people: "Some . . . may feel the need to be teachers or nurses or leaders of your race. But most of you will be denied. . . . The young chemist picks cotton. The young writer is unable to learn to read. The teacher is held in useless slavery to some ironing board. We have no representatives in government. We have no vote. In all of this great country we are the most oppressed of all people. . . . People of the Negro race, arise! . . . We must arise and be whole again! We must be free!"²²

In 1940, when *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* was published, the civil rights movement was emerging. The moving force behind civil rights in Columbus, and likely a model for Dr. Copeland, was Dr. Thomas Brewer, a charismatic and sometimes confrontational leader called "Chief" by his followers. He founded the Social-Civic-25 Club in 1929, composed of Columbus' 25 most prominent male African American leaders. He chartered an NAACP chapter in 1939. Brewer spearheaded and helped finance the ultimately successful drive to overturn the white Democratic primary in Georgia which for decades had almost completely disfranchised black voters. He attacked the Jim Crow system for thirty years, with demands for black police officers, public parks for black citizens, and desegregation of the public golf course and school system. As a physician, he was somewhat immune to pressure from the white power structure, but he began to receive death threats and started carrying a pistol.²³

²¹ Richard Wright, "Inner Landscape," *New Republic* 103 (August 1940): 195.

²² McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, 225, 164.

²³ Billy Winn, "Brewer's Life, Death Helped Shape Our History," *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*, April 24, 1988; Winn, "Brewer Was on Collision Course with 1950s," *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*, May 1, 1988; Winn, "'Shots in Rapid Succession' Death to Brewer," *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*, May 8, 1988.



Dr. Thomas H. Brewer



Brewer across the street from his office and
Luico Flowers' F&B Department Store

Tension in the city increased with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. Whites believed the order to desegregate public schools placed their entire way of life under attack. In 1956, the state school board made membership in the NAACP illegal. It gave teachers until September 15 to resign from the NAACP or lose their teaching certificates for life. The board declared it would revoke the license of any teacher who "supports, condones, encourages, offers to teach or teaches" integrated classes. Brewer's association with the NAACP and his repeated efforts to end school segregation were widely reported, making him the lightning rod for white resentment. In the midst of this growing crisis, early in 1956, Brewer witnessed a white police officer break a nightstick over the head of a black suspect in front of his second-floor office on 1st Avenue. Luico Flowers was a white man who operated the store downstairs, renting from Brewer who owned the building. His store mainly catered to black customers. He also saw the incident. When Brewer asked Flowers to join him in his formal complaint against police brutality, Flowers refused. Flowers later claimed Brewer threatened him with a boycott or with physical harm if he did not cooperate. He asked for police protection. On February 18, 1956, Brewer entered Flowers' store and went to the rear looking for the store owner. At least one police officer was in the store; two others were outside. Suddenly,

gunshots rang out in rapid succession, and Brewer lay dead of seven bullet wounds. In later testimony to the grand jury, Flowers claimed he shot Brewer in self-defense. He was never charged with a crime. In a bizarre twist, almost exactly a year later, Flowers was found in the lobby of a theatre down the street from his store, dead from gunshots to the head. A handkerchief was stuffed in his mouth and two pistols were by his side, both fired. His death was ruled a suicide.²⁴

Brewer's death attracted national attention, reported on the front page of the *New York Times*.²⁵ The African American community believed (and many still believe) Brewer was the victim of a planned assassination. The *Journal of the National Medical Association* asserted that he had been "quietly lynched." Local African Americans contended that the police later killed Flowers to cover up his involvement in the plot.²⁶ True or not, Brewer's death led to an exodus of Columbus' African American professionals—doctors, lawyers, and teachers—leaving a leadership vacuum within black community. One historian noted that "by the 1960s, there was little legacy left of Brewer's leadership and activism of the 1940s." An NAACP organizer in 1964 found Columbus "the toughest town I had to deal with." He said, "The blacks here didn't seem to want to do anything."²⁷ One local newspaper editor characterized Columbus in the 1960s as a place of "great social rest."

McCullers clearly used Columbus as the physical setting for much of her work. The historical context of her home town also molded McCullers' attitudes about gender, class, and race. Her fiction reflects the deep issues and themes that divided the city. Columbus shaped Carson McCullers into an unflinching observer, sympathetic to the outsider, the oppressed, and the powerless.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Negro Leader Slain in Georgia Dispute," *New York Times*, February 19, 1956; "Freed in Negro Death: White Georgia Store Owner's Indictment Refused by Jury," *New York Times*, March 1, 1956.

²⁶ W. Montague Cobb, "Thomas Hency Brewer, Dr., M.D., 194-1956," *Journal of the National Medical Association* (May 1956): 191-193, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2641107/pdf/jnma00721-0042.pdf>; "Black Doctor Killed Under 'Suspicious Circumstances,'" *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races* 90, no. 4 (1983): 23.

²⁷ Stephen G.N. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 144; Liza Benham, "King Led Challenge of White-Only Voting," *Sunday Ledger-Enquirer*, June 13, 1982.

Emmaus Baptist Church, Muscogee County, Georgia

By

Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr.

Emmaus Baptist Church was located from 1837 until 1942 on Buena Vista Road close to the easternmost edge of Muscogee County, 15 miles from Columbus. It was the church of many of my maternal ancestors and survived until the church building was purchased by the United States government in 1921 as part of Fort Benning. The congregation, which was allowed to operate the church until 1942, existed before the church building in this c.1898 photograph was constructed. Randall Creek flows from north to south on the north western edge of Land Lot 206 where the church was located on the eastern edge in the 1921 deed and on maps. No Georgia Law exists that incorporates this church, although some laws survive incorporating churches of this era. The church was described as being one big room with windows all around and doors on three sides.²⁸



Emmaus Baptist Church, congregation gathered perhaps for the changing of pastors, c. 1898, but definitely before May 1899. Courtesy of Mrs. Joan Mahone Magoni.

The Church was originally called, "Liberty" but was changed to "Emmaus" in 1855. The congregation, as far as we know, always pronounced it as "EM-me-us", not "eh-MAY-us" as some might. The church apparently was named for the village mentioned in the Bible in Luke 24:13. Today

²⁸ Telephone interview, March 12, 1994, with Mrs. Martha Ritch Magoni Foster, who grew up in this church.

we do not know if the church always met on or had a building on the same piece of land where it ended its existence.

The church membership was never very large. In 1850, they had 24 members (14 white, 10 black), but after the 1855 revival, mentioned below, in 1856 they were up to 80 members (58/22). In 1865 after the Civil War ended, they had 54 whites and 28 blacks and by 1869 still had black members (52/20). In 1900 there were 71 members, in 1936 61 and at dissolution in 1942, 38.²⁹

While I was in high school, in early 1963, I went with my grandfather, Joseph H. Brooks (1903-1982), to the home of Curtis B. Taff (1906-1979) where I copied some of the information he had related to the church. That material is abstracted as part of this article. Taff was the last church clerk, serving from 1936 to 1942, and thus ended up with the remaining church records.³⁰ When I took these notes I was about 16 years old. The originals were inherited by his son, Rev. S. Ellis Taff (1936-2013), who later donated them along with other church materials to the Georgia Baptist History Depository, housed now in the Mercer University, Jack Tarver Library Special Collections Department, in Macon, Georgia.

Curtis Taff's records included a list of pastors starting with 1854, and I decided to add to that list material from the Columbus Baptist Association annual minutes (similar to an annual report) borrowed on microfilm through interlibrary loan from Mercer's Baptist archives. This adds a good bit to the history of this church, which is a great help because minute books before 1915 are not known to exist.

Besides providing history on Emmaus Church, this article can also serve as an example of what can be learned about a Baptist church in Georgia during the 19th century from published materials and how to reconstruct a partial history of a church from such surviving records. Online newspapers are also helpful in piecing together church histories.

The members of this church were mostly farmers and their families, and most lived in Muscogee and Chattahoochee counties. Many of them were my own ancestors, and most were my relatives.

The Columbus Baptist Association (hereinafter referred to as CBA) was formed in 1829 and still exists. A 1918 map showed the association partnered with churches in Chattahoochee, Harris, Marion, Meriwether, Muscogee, Talbot, and Taylor counties. The Minutes from the annual session (or meeting) listed the name of each member church, its county, the minister, the clerk, the delegates to the meeting, and the number of members; death notices were often included. In 1842, a short history of each church within the association was included. On page 14 the following history of "Liberty" Church says:

²⁹ Statistics from the Columbus Baptist Association's annual report/minutes published in years given.

³⁰ Emmaus Baptist Church, Folder 1936-1937, Minutes for September 1936, Special Collections, Jack Tarver Library, Mercer University, Macon, Georgia.

Liberty, Muscogee county, constituted Sept. 30, 1837, with 12 members, by Wm. Conway, J. B. Waldroup, A. Smith; *Pastor* C. C. Willis, 1837; *Deacons*, R. Harris, A. Perry; revivals in 1838 and '39; *baptised* 55, received by letter 21; total 88.³¹

A search of these names shows several were Baptist ministers and further research shows the founders of Emmaus (originally known as Liberty) came out of Bethel Baptist Church, founded in 1829, and still active in Midland. The church was 9 miles north of Emmaus. Bethel's August 1837 Minutes state:

"A portion of Brethren living on Randol's Creek request leave of (*unreadable*) church to receive and baptise [*sic*] candidates for baptism provided that the (*unreadable*) is properly authorized." ... "Rec'd the following persons on Randol's creek where the'r [*sic*] is an arm of this church. Viz. Mary Bagley, Henry A. Ivy, Thos. Harrell & Lavica Ann Weaver and Moor Bagly [*sic*]." The September 1837 meeting listed G. B. Waldrop, moderator, of Bethel, and then listed the following persons applying for letters of dismissal; several names were the same listed as the founders of Liberty/Emmaus: Jesse Stallings and wife Caroline, Alvy Perry and wife Charlotte, Moor Bagly, Thos. Harral, Mary Bagley, John Skinner, Henry A. Ivy, and Alfred Mizzell. The January 26, 1838, meeting indicated a letter had been received from Liberty in Muscogee County in the hands of Bros. John Skinner and Alvy Perry requesting that Bethel set apart Bro. Cary C. Willis to the office of Bishop.³²

In the CBA excerpt from 1842, the "J. B. Waldroup" should be Rev. G. B. (for Greenberry) Waldrop who served as minister at Bethel from 1832 to 1839. An online biographical sketch by a descendant said he later became a Primitive Baptist minister.³³

"A. Smith" listed in 1842 was most likely Rev. Anderson Smith.³⁴ Deacon R. Harris appears to be Roderick Harris, and A. Perry is above-mentioned Alvy Perry. He appears in the 1840 Muscogee County Census as living next to the above-mentioned Moor Bagley, who later lived in Chattahoochee County and has a biographical sketch in the county history.³⁵

The Bethel Baptist Church membership list, published in this journal, lists the same people above, who were dismissed in September 1837, but also coordinates how they joined Bethel by baptism or by letter. It would appear many joined in August 1837 only to be dismissed by letter the

³¹ *Minutes of the 14th annual session of the Columbus Baptist Association...1842*, (Columbus, Georgia, 1842?), 14. Originals at Mercer University and via microfilm from them.

³² Bethel Baptist Church, Muscogee County, Georgia, Minutes 1829-1872, on Microfilm Reel 186/9 at the Georgia Archives. Entries are in chronological order.

³³ "Waldrop-Bethel Baptist Church..." written 2005 by Sandra nee Waldrop, accessed August 9, 2012.

³⁴ Obituary, Rev. Anderson Smith, *The Christian Index*, May 14, 1841, 320. He died in Harris County, Georgia.

³⁵ N. K. Rogers, *History of Chattahoochee County, Georgia* (Greenville, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1976, reprint of 1933 edition), 103-104, 301-303 including a picture.

next month as founding members of Liberty/Emmaus.³⁶ Others had been members a bit longer such as Skinner, who joined in June 1829, and the Perrys who joined in September 1834.

Rev. Carey C. Willis was ordained to preach at Bethel and always listed Liberty/Emmaus as his first pastorate. A biographical sketch indicated he spent six years there.³⁷

None of these early lay founders are related to the author, nor did they remain in the immediate area of the church after the 1840s. Skinner is perhaps the only possibility as someone whose descendants may have remained nearby in Muscogee County. Moor Bagley became a well-known person in Chattahoochee County (founded from Muscogee in 1853) and has many local descendants today. Roderick Harris died in December 1850 in Muscogee but in the section later carved into Chattahoochee County.³⁸

Around this time my ancestors John Johnson, his future father-in-law, Thomas Motley, and future brother-in-law L. K. Willis, and Johnson's brother, Samuel D. Johnson, and their kin were moving into the area. By 1845-1847, my relatives were in the church. Two of them, S. D. Johnson, and later L. K. Willis, were church clerks.

Ministers, Clerks, and Delegates, 1837-1942

Information on the following chart was compiled by combining information from Curtis Taff's records (now at Mercer) and the CBA Annual Minutes.³⁹ Taff's list began with 1854 and only included the ministers' last names and the clerks. Delegates and membership totals are all from the CBA Annual Minutes. Any information from other sources is noted accordingly. The Taff list had the heading "Former Pastors of Emmaus Church" and was copied in the back of the more recent minute book (1915-1930s)⁴⁰ indicating it was a much older record. From the details in the Taff list, it seems that the list's author had access to church minutes because the month and year of the change of pastors was included. There are CBA Annual Reports for almost every year, but it was not the intent of the author to fill in all the information, so more information does exist especially with regard to delegates and membership numbers.

The church, as indicated, was originally called "Liberty," and by 1855 had been renamed "Emmaus." The church's new name was firmly established by 1855 as indicated in a letter to the editor of the *Christian Index*, the Georgia Baptist state newspaper, which referenced a revival held at

³⁶ Stephen P. Barber, transcriber, "Membership List of Bethel Baptist Church-Muscogee County, Georgia." *Muscogiana* XII (2, Fall 2001): 15-20, and XIII (1, Spring 2002): 16-22; XIII (2, Fall 2002): 29-34.

³⁷ *History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia* (Atlanta: Jas. P. Harrison & Co., 1881) 590-592, sketch of Rev. Carey C. Willis.

³⁸ "Tribute of Respect [for Rodrick Harris]," *Columbus Enquirer*, January 7, 1851: 4.

³⁹ Columbus Baptist Association Minutes of the Annual Session, originals found at Special Collections, Jack Tarver Library, Mercer University, Macon, Georgia. Microfilm editions available via Mercer as well.

⁴⁰ Emmaus Baptist Church CB [Church Book] 1915-1930s, pp. 152-153, Special Collections, Jack Tarver Library, Mercer University, Macon, Georgia.

Emmaus in August 1855 with Brother Hardison, the former pastor, mentioned. Rev. Thomas J. Miles, the letter writer, had been pastor there since January. He indicated that the church was revived, sinners were converted, and many joined by experience. ⁴¹

1830s	MINISTER	CLERK	DELEGATES	Members (white / black)	Church Name	Remarks
1837, Sep 30	C.C. Willis		Roderick Harris, J. Skinner	12	Liberty	church constituted
1838	C.C. Willis (2)				Liberty	Revival
1839	C.C. Willis (2)		Roderick Harris, J. Skinner		Liberty	revival; delegates called "messengers"
1840s	MINISTER	CLERK	DELEGATES	Members (white / black)	Church Name	Remarks
1840	C.C. Willis (2)				Liberty	
1841	C.C. Willis (2)		Roderick Harris		Liberty	delegates called "messengers"
1842	C.C. Willis (2)	A. Mizell	J. Wilkes	88	Liberty	delegates called "messengers"
1843	None	H. Ivy	J. Wilkes		Liberty	
1844	None	A. Perry	J. Wilkes		Liberty	
1845	None	S.D. Johnson	Price Davis	53	Liberty	
1846	No listing in CBA				Liberty	
1847	None		L.K. Willis, J. Hays	29	Liberty	
1848	None	L.K. Willis	L.K. Willis		Liberty	P.O. is Upatoi
1849	B.W. Steely	L.K. Willis	L.K. Willis		Liberty	
1850s	MINISTER	CLERK	DELEGATES	Members (white / black)	Church Name	Remarks
1850	B.W. Steely	L.K. Willis	L.K. Willis , J. Hays	24 (14w,10b)	Liberty	
1851	B.W. Steely	L.K. Willis	J.C. Edwards, J. Hays	32	Liberty	
1852	B.W. Steely	L.K. Willis	L.K. Willis, J. Hays	41 (28w,13b)	Liberty	
1853	H. Hardison	L.K. Willis	L.K. Willis, J. Hays	26w	Liberty	
1854, Nov	Hardison	L.K. Willis	L.K. Willis, S.D. Johnson		Liberty	
1855, Jan	T. J. Miles	L.K. Willis	L.K. Willis, S.D. Johnson		Emmaus	Post office Cottage Mills
1855				60 (44w,16b)	Emmaus	Revival
1856	T. J. Miles	L.K. Willis	L.K. Willis, J. Estes	80 (58w,22b)	Emmaus	
1857, Jan	Amos	J.C. Reedy			Emmaus	Reedy was son-in-law of L. K. Willis
1857	T. J. Miles	J.C. Reedy	L K. Willis, J. Hays	72 (58w,14b)	Emmaus	
1858, Jan	Miles	J.C. Reedy	L.K. Willis, S. D. Johnson		Emmaus	

⁴¹ "Revival, "The Christian Index, August 16, 1855, 130. On microfilm at the Georgia Archives.

1859, Jan	Miles	J.C. Reedy	L.K. Willis, S.D. Johnson		Emmaus	
1859					Emmaus	
1860s	MINISTER	CLERK	DELEGATES	Members (white / black)	Church Name	Remarks
1860, Jan	Miles	J.C. Edward	L.K. Willis, J. Hayes		Emmaus	
1860, May	Miles	J.C. Edward			Emmaus	
1861, Jan	Murphy	J.C. Reedy			Emmaus	
1862, Jan	Taylor	A.J. Harris			Emmaus	
1863, Jan	Murphy	A.J. Harris			Emmaus	
1864, Feb	Murphy	J.C. Reedy			Emmaus	
1865, Jan	Murphy	J.C. Reedy			Emmaus	
1865	T. H. Murphy	J.C. Reedy	Gray Harris	82 (54w,28b)	Emmaus	
1866	Murphy	A.J. Harris			Emmaus	
1866, Oct	E. Dyer	A.J. Harris	S. D. Johnson		Emmaus	
1867	Dyer	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1868	Wm. Whipple	R.R. Snellings	Gray Harris	67 (52w,15b)	Emmaus	Harris is Snellings' step- father
1869	W. A. Whipple	R.R. Snellings	L.K. Willis, R R Snellings	72 (52w,20b)	Emmaus	
1870s	MINISTER	CLERK	DELEGATES	Members (white / black)	Church Name	Remarks
1870	Whipple	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1871	L.K. Willis (1,3)	R.R. Snellings	L.K. Willis, S. D. Johnson		Emmaus	
1872	L.K. Willis (1,3)	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1873	Wm. Lively	R.R. Snellings		30	Emmaus	
1874	Wm. Lively	R.R. Snellings	L. McMurrain, R. Snellings	27	Emmaus	
1875	Lively			27	Emmaus	
1876	Lively	R.R. Snellings	Wm. Lively, J.W. McMurrain	37	Emmaus	
1877	Lively	R.R. Snellings	Same	37	Emmaus	
1878	Weekly	R.R. Snellings	S.D. Johnson J. W. McMurrain		Emmaus	
1879	G. W. Weekly	R.R. Snellings	James Moore	38	Emmaus	
1880s	MINISTER	CLERK	DELEGATES	Members (white / black)	Church Name	Remarks
1880	Weekly	R.R. Snellings		36	Emmaus	
1881	Weekly	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1882	Page	R.R. Snellings		34	Emmaus	Post office is Mulville (later changed to Eelbeck)
1883	Page	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	

1884	Page	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1885	Page	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1886	Matt. Page	R.R. Snellings	Wm.Greer, Elias King		Emmaus	
1887	W. P. Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1888	Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1889	Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1890s	MINISTER	CLERK	DELEGATES	Members (white / black)	Church Name	Remarks
1890	Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1891	Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1892	Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1893	Allison	R.R. Snellings	Lane Tolbert, Elias King		Emmaus	
1894	Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1895	Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1896	Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1897	Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1898	Railey	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1899	Railey	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1900s	MINISTER	CLERK	DELEGATES	Members (white / black)	Church Name	Remarks
1900	Tidd (2 mos.) April: Williams B. B. Williams	R.R. Snellings	J. Robert Snellings, Charlie Simons, S. B. Simons, O. W. Taff	71	Emmaus	Eelbeck
1901	Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1902	Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1903	Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1904	Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1905	Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1906	Allison	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1907, Feb	Boswell	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1908	Cline	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1909	Cline	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1910s	MINISTER	CLERK	DELEGATES	Members (white / black)	Church Name	Remarks
1910	Flannigan	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1911	Flannigan	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1912	Flannigan	R.R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1913	Peed	J. Robert Snellings			Emmaus	
1914	Peed	J. R. Snellings			Emmaus	

1915	Peed	J. R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1916	Peed	J. R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1917	Peed	J. R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1918	Peed	J. R. Snellings	Robert Snellings, Clyde Taft, W. M. Taft, Elma McArdle, C. R. Mehaffey, and W. M. Peed		Emmaus	Ft. Benning is begun in the fall, effecting church's future.
1919	Peed	J. R. Snellings			Emmaus	
1920s	MINISTER	CLERK	DELEGATES	Members (white / black)	Church Name	Remarks
1920	Peed	J. R. Snellings	P.B. McArdle, S. R. (sic) Snellings, J. R. Snellings		Emmaus	
1921	L. H. Crenshaw Allison (4)	J. R. Snellings		66	Emmaus	Church building sold to the government.
1922	None	J. R. Snellings		55	Emmaus	
1923	J. L. Whitley	J. R. Snellings	J. R. Snellings, Clyde Taff, and C. L. McArdell	55	Emmaus	Minister from Mauk, GA.
1924	J. L. Whitley	J. R. Snellings	J.W. Martin, Floyd Taff, and S. D. Snellings	74	Emmaus	
1925	J. L. Whitley	J. R. Snellings	J. R. and S.D. Snellings and C. L. McCardel	81	Emmaus	
1926	J. L. Whitley	J. R. Snellings	J. R. Snellings, Robert Ritch, Roy Mehaffey, and S. D. Snellings	75	Emmaus	
1927	F.C. Howard	J. R. Snellings	J. R. Snellings, S. D. Snellings, C. R. Mehaffey, and John Martin	75	Emmaus	Minister from Howard, GA.
1928	None Listed	J. R. Snellings	J. R. Snellings, S. D. Snellings, John Martin, Sgt. J. A. Smith, and C. R. Mehaffey	75	Emmaus	
1929	None Listed	J. R. Snellings	S. D. Snellings, Sgt. J. A. Smith, Mrs. J. A. Smith, C. R. Mehaffey, and Mrs. C. R. Mehaffey.		Emmaus	
1930s	MINISTER	CLERK	DELEGATES	Members (white / black)	Church Name	Remarks
1930	F. C. Howard	J. R. Snellings (5)			Emmaus	
1931	W. W. Nails	C. Roy Mehaffey			Emmaus	
1932	W. W. Nails				Emmaus	
1933	Richard W. Chaplin	Otis Eckman		89	Emmaus	
1934	Richard W. Chaplin				Emmaus	
1935	Richard W. Chaplin	J. Frank Rushin			Emmaus	
1936	Richard W. Chaplin	Curtis B. Taff		61	Emmaus	
1937	Richard W. Chaplin	Curtis B. Taff			Emmaus	
1938	Richard W. Chaplin	Curtis B. Taff			Emmaus	
1939	Vacant	Curtis B. Taff		55	Emmaus	

1940s	MINISTER	CLERK	DELEGATES	Members (white / black)	Church Name	Remarks
1940	Charles Brewer	Curtis B. Taff	Sam D. Snellings, C. R. Mehaffey, Archie Smith	45	Emmaus	Minister from Ariton, Alabama
1941	Charles Brewer	Curtis B. Taff			Emmaus	
1942	Charles Brewer	Curtis B. Taff		40	Emmaus	Church dissolution

note 1: listed as licensed to preach

note 2: dates derived from Biographical sketch of Rev. Willis, that stated he spent 6 years as pastor of Liberty / Emmaus

note 3: presumed to be the local substitute minister because there was no other minister listed. This information came from the Taff material. CBA reports for 1870, 1871, and 1872 list no minister. The Taff list also has a total gap of information for minister and clerk for 1875 through 1877.

note 4: Church member Martha Ritch Magoni Foster statement to author

note 5: J. Robert Snellings remained church clerk until his death in 1930⁴²

African-American Members

As with other antebellum churches, the slaves were also members. We do not have any record at Emmaus of when they officially left to form their own congregation/church elsewhere, although the statistics, given above, show there were still black members in 1869. We do know from Bethel, what happened there. According to their minutes, the African-Americans had their own regular meetings, with the white minister, between 1867 and 1872 when they got land for their own church, but were still listed in 1868 as members of Bethel, and many continued to join, and it was only in 1872 that they had their own church and the official separation occurred.⁴³

Emmaus Church- the end

When the announcement was made in the summer and fall of 1918 that a large amount of land in Muscogee and Chattahoochee counties would be purchased for the new U. S. Army base, first called Camp Benning (later Fort Benning), Emmaus Baptist Church's site, as well as the homes and farms of most of its members, was in the middle of this proposal.

Mrs. Martha Ritch Magoni Foster (1904-1999) remembered that Rev. W. P. Allison (1851-1935) of Brantley, Georgia, was the pastor at the time of the sale of the church while others served afterwards. She said he drove a horse and buggy and was often paid for his services with chickens and vegetables.⁴⁴ Mrs. Foster also recalled that for baptisms, the church used the mill pond just down the road to the east at Eelbeck where the Mehaffey family lived.

⁴² Same as Footnote 14.

⁴³ Stephen Barber, "Blacks and Whites Together: The Experience of Some Baptist Churches in Muscogee County, Georgia, 1825-1872, *Muscogiana* XI (1 and 2, Summer 2000): 14-15.

⁴⁴ Telephone interview March 12, 1994, with the author. She was a first cousin of the author's grandfather, Joseph H. Brooks.

The files at the National Archives at Atlanta (covering the Southeast Region) in Morrow include the sale of the church land. Information there provides the following summary of events.

Due to the lawsuit that forced the sale of properties that the owners did not sell voluntarily to the United States government after appraisals were made, the church had a federal judgment against it, and that judgment was recorded as the deed for the sale of the property. It was listed as Parcel 164 in the "Proceedings to Condemn Land."⁴⁵

The church sold the building for \$1,000; from the wording of the deed they did not own the land which was part of Land Lot 206, in the 9th District of Muscogee County.⁴⁶ The southern portion of this land lot was owned since the 1850s by members of the John Johnson family which included Johnson; his widow, Sarah Motley Johnson; daughter Lenorah Johnson Snellings; and son-in-law R. Ross Snellings, the the long-time church clerk. The church was west of the Snellings home located on Land Lot 211, on the north side of Buena Vista Road. Mrs. Snellings and a few others had the equivalent of a life estate to remain on their land from the sale in 1921 until her death in 1940, just before the second acquisition or expansion of Fort Benning began in 1941, and before the United States entered World War II.

Even though the congregation sold the church building in 1921, the building stood until 1942. Surviving church minutes from the 1920s to 1939 show that church activities continued with no mention of Fort Benning activities. The church held revivals in 1933 and 1934, repaired the roof, and discussed selling benches among other things.⁴⁷ The pastorate was vacant for 1939 (CBA) while church membership was at 55. The following year, in 1940, Charles Brewer of Arton, Alabama, was listed as pastor, with membership at 45. He continued into 1942 when the CBA reported the church disbanded with 40 members. Two of these members, Miss Mirah Ginn, and Mr. Eddie King,⁴⁸ died, and some 38 letters of dismissal were issued, although a list of those final 38 members was not within the collection. With these deaths and dismissals, the Emmaus Baptist Church ceased to exist.

The School

Mrs. Foster also recalled attending a traditional one-room school that operated next to and just above the hill near the Emmaus Church. The teacher she remembered was Madeline Ramsay, who taught all the grades, stressing the three "Rs", geography and spelling. Mrs. Foster often went to school barefooted. Ms. Ramsay lived with the Elias King family at Eelbeck. This school was apparently

⁴⁵ *United States of America vs. 115, 000 Acres of Land, More or Less in the Counties of Chattahoochee and Muscogee Counties, Georgia*. U. S. Federal District Court, Northern District of Georgia, Western Division-Columbus. Law Cases 1915-1926, Case Number 42, Parcel 164. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 21, Atlanta Branch, Morrow, Georgia. The check for \$1,000 is found in Box 4, "Misc. Records."

⁴⁶ Muscogee County, GA, Deed Book 36, pp. 486-487, dated May 12, 1921.

⁴⁷ Emmaus Church Records, at Mercer, as cited above, in the minute book and then loose materials now in folders.

⁴⁸ CBA Minutes for 1942, originals at Mercer University.

under the Muscogee County School Board as much about the school's activities in the early 20th century can be found in the Columbus newspapers online via GenealogyBank website. Newspaper sources provide data that Ms. Ramsay (1888-1974) was a niece of J. L. Bond, county school superintendent, a teacher at Emmaus in August 1914 at the beginning of the school year though by 1916 she was at another school in Columbus.⁴⁹

Mrs. Foster transferred to Midway Consolidated School, west on Buena Vista Road near Midway Methodist Church. Her family and others drove with mules and wagons to the new Midway School, which she said greatly improved their educational circumstances.⁵⁰ She had a picture which shows barefooted children with a teacher, although she was not sure if it was Emmaus or Midway school.⁵¹

Emmaus School was featured in a short article in 1897 in the *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*. At that time the teacher--or professor as they called him--was Franklin Browne. He started teaching July 19 and taught the children of Allen Tolbert, James Taff, Ross Snellings, Amanda Skinner, D. C. Gordy, Samuel McMurray, and Elias King. He taught music, drawing, history and calisthenics.⁵²

Ross Snellings' daughter, Sally, was my great-grandmother, and she had married in 1895, but her younger brother, Sam Snellings, born in 1886, the youngest child, would have been one of these students. His son was the late Dr. Schley D. Snellings of Columbus.

Members on a list c. 1898-1910 in records held by Curtis Taff, c. 1960s., now at Mercer

As with many church membership lists, the one in the book of Minutes started in 1915 contains names of key members who had been dead for some time, although some key members are not listed. My ancestor L. K. Willis died in 1880. The list is not alphabetical, and appears to be grouped in places by families. This I observed because I know the names of my relatives. It is not clear how the original list was compiled, but in many churches such rolls list people in the order in which they joined the church.⁵³

⁴⁹ "County School Teachers Elected," *The Columbus Ledger* (Columbus, Georgia), August 10, 1914, 8; and "North Highlands School to Have Two New Teachers," *The Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, October 26, 1916, 8.

⁵⁰ Telephone interview, March 12, 1994, with Martha Ritch Magoni Foster by the author.

⁵¹ Photograph now owned by Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., and used in his book, *Images of America, Fort Benning* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), p. 19.

⁵² "The Emmons [sic] School," *Columbus Enquirer-Sun* (Columbus, Georgia), November 24, 1897, 7, column 1.

⁵³ Emmaus Baptist Church CB [Church Book] 1915-1930s, pp. 154-155, Special Collections, Jack Tarver Library, Mercer University, Macon, Georgia.

The two-column list below is arranged exactly as it appeared on the page of the original source. It is reproduced here in its original layout as an aid in research: The layout may suggest how family members are grouped together, etc. Information in brackets is from personal knowledge by the author.

Male [Members of] Emmaus Baptist Church

R. R. Snellings	Tom Mendenhall
A. J. Harris	Willie Tolbert
S. D. Johnson [d. 1899]	Charlie Akins
L. K. Willis [d. 1880]	Otis Peed
J. C. Reedy	Bro. Copeland
Frank Tolbert	Frank Snellings Sr. [d. 1885 in Texas]
Allen Tolbert	T. J. Bradford
Gabe Tolbert	Frank King
L. Y. Tolbert	Jessie Diamond
Homer Phelps	Joe Bailey [d.1919]
Arthur Phelps	
Lumpkin Phelps	
E. L. King	
Billy Grier	
Judson Greer	
Henry Greer	
E. P. Greer	
Will McCardle	
Jeff McCardle	
Jim McCardle	
Emmette King [d. 1901]	
Onah King	
James Taff	
O.W. Taff	
Charlie Taff	
Otis Taff	
Clyde Taff	
Floyd Taff	
S. B. Simons	
Charlie Simons	
Buller ?? Simons	
Tom Funderburk	
Billy Funderburk	
R. E. L. McMurrain	
F. W. McMurrain	

The two-column list below is arranged exactly as it appeared on the page of the original source. It is reproduced here in its original layout as an aid in research: The layout may suggest how family members are grouped together, etc. Information in brackets is from personal knowledge by the author.

[Female Members of] Emmaus Baptist Church 1898

Renie Taft	Jane McCardle
Naomi Tolbert	Nancy Grier
Carrie Mendenhall	Barbrie ?? Grier
Georgia Ginn	Bessie McMurrain
Allie Ginn	Carrie King [d. 1890, w. of E. L. King]
Mary Taft	Mollie King
Jane Taft	Marie McCardle
Sarah Taft	Mozelle Summecamp
Carrie Tolbert	Eliza Funderburk
Sallie Brooks	Nancy Davis
Berta McMurrain	Kizzie Taft
Ida McMurrain [d. 1892]	Nancy Ritch
Julia Ritch	Mollie Ritch
Nora Melton	Fannie Brooks
Georgia Brooks	Nancy Taft
Sallie Moore	Jessie Blythe [nee King, m. 1906]
Sallie Parker	Ada Ginn
Emma Grier	Ola Massey
Fannie McCardle	Lucy Massey
Fannie Gallops	Gula May Simons
Mollie McCardle	Rota ? Phelps
Sarah Johnson	Sister Tatum
Keziah Johnson	Kissie Gilbert
Sallie Ritch	Mollie Snellings [moved to Texas, d. 1891]
Zaidee Akins	Mrs. Frank King
May Akins	Lottie McGuirt
Mattie Funderburk	Minnie George
Annie McGinty	Georgia Raiford
Eva Mae Taft	Nicy ? Bailey
Mina Peed	Annie McMurrain [nee Phoebe Ann Motley]
Annie Belle Peed	Willie Martin Tomblin
Ada Lee Peed	Annie Ginn Anderson
S. B. Simons [Mrs. ?]	Bell McBride
Martha Simons	
Magnolia Simons	
Mamie Simons	

Several families spelled their names different ways, and whoever wrote this list seems to not have considered that. For instance, Tolbert is also Talbot, Grier was often Greer, McCardle was spelled various ways, Akins doubled for Akin, and Taff was sometimes written as Taft.

Members not found on the list:

Lenorah "Nora" Johnson Snellings (1848-1940), my grandfather's grandmother, should be listed. Her husband, children and mother are listed and she was a life-long member.

J. Robert Snellings (1874-1930), her son, was church clerk from 1913 to 1930.

C. R. Mehaffey who married Rosa, daughter of Elias L. King, in 1906 may have joined after the list was compiled, but his family were members at the end and very involved in the church.

Other membership lists exist for 1927, 1931, and 1936 in the Church Minute Book at Mercer.

Deceased Members of the Emmaus Baptist Church

The following lists deaths as found within some of the various CBA Minutes. The year of the report is given and the death information is cited in full, although some notes were taken decades ago. These annual listings seem to have started in 1895. The dates of death could actually be the previous year. Later CBA Minutes also contain deaths, but the information herein was abstracted fully through 1919. A few additional years were also researched.

- 1899 Mrs. Sallie Moore, age 62 years; Mary Akins [sic, Mrs. May Akin], age 24 years. Bro. Sam Johnson, age 81 years. [This is Samuel D. Johnson]
- 1902 Sister Nancy Taff, age 70; Sister Ada Rogers, age 30.
- 1910 Judson Greer, Mrs. S. D. Johnson [Keziah Motley]. Mrs. S. B. Simons
- 1912 Sister E. J. (or T) McArdle
- 1913 Sister Ollie Gina [sic Ginn]
- 1914 Brother J. M. Taft [sic Taff]
- 1917 Caroline Brooks, Dovie Pate
- 1918 Caroline Brooke [listed again], Edna Brooks, Ella Bassett, R. R. Snellings, Mary Taft [sic Taff]
- 1919 Joe Bailey
- 1940 Mrs. Bettie Taff, Mrs. Lenorah Snellings, Mrs. Ella King
- 1942 Miss Mira Ginn, Mr. Eddie King

The Cemetery at Emmaus

The cemetery close to the Emmaus Church and which in most cemetery lists is called the "Emmaus Church Cemetery" does not appear to have been the place for burial of church members per se since in that area of the county people seemed to have been buried in family graveyards. One

example is the Snellings-Johnson-McMurrain burial ground on the south side of Buena Vista Road. Further west on Buena Vista Road, the Midway Methodist Church had a burial ground got church families and others.

The cemetery at Emmaus seems to have been used by members of the L. K. Willis family as best I can tell. The only marked burials are descendants of L. K. Willis and his wife Nancy Motley Willis (my own ancestors) and of his sister, Betsy Willis Champion Greer, her second husband, William Greer, and her daughter, Arena Champion Taff. These have previously been recorded with transcription errors in *Muscogiana*.⁵⁴

Interviews in the 1960s with older Willis family members told me the cemetery was established by the Willis family when their son, Benjamin Thomas Willis, died on August 20, 1864 during the Civil War in battle near Atlanta at Lovejoy's Station, Georgia. A surviving family story said his father and others retrieved his body and brought it home for reburial. I was also told that he was first buried in the Johnson Cemetery where his uncle John Johnson who had died on July 20, 1864 had recently been buried. Due to objections of Mrs. Johnson, his aunt, his body had to be exhumed and reburied again. He was thus presumably the first burial in the so-called Emmaus Church Cemetery. His sister obtained a government marker in 1932, which bears no dates, but the inscription is B. T. Willis, Co. C, 46 GA INF CSA.⁵⁵ The last marked burials are 1934, as the U. S. Army has always allowed families to continue their burial rights in the cemeteries which are maintained by the government. The tombstones and some annotations of data, again with information errors, can be found today on the FindAGrave Website.

Ministers who served at Emmaus

The only minister to come out of Emmaus in the early days was my own ancestor, Littleberry Kinnebrew Willis, referred to as L. K. Willis or Berry Willis. Born c. 1812, he died in 1880. The Taff list of ministers at Emmaus, mentioned above, includes the reference "Willis 1871-1872" and I assume this is a reference to L. K. Willis, who was church clerk for many years. He was listed in the CBA Minutes as licensed to preach (but not ordained) in their reports starting in 1862 and off and on thru 1875. I do not know why he was never ordained. In my earliest interviews with his surviving grandchildren, he was always referred to as Reverend Willis. Family tradition is that he was buried in 1880 at the Emmaus Cemetery and his wife Nancy Motley Willis before him in 1877, next to their son.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Horner, Sylvia, "Cemetery #24 (Emmaus Baptist Cemetery), Muscogee County," *Muscogiana* VI (3 & 4, Fall 1995): 106. The author has his own partial transcript of the tombstones from a c. 1963 visit to the cemetery.

⁵⁵ U. S. Headstone Applications, 1925-1963, via Ancestry.com.

⁵⁶ Interviews in 1960s with Mrs. Jennie Lee (Talbot) O'Toole and the author, in person; and the Willis Family Bible then in her possession, now lost, but copies exist of the family pages in the author's files and in the DAR Application for Mrs. Doris Talbot Brown.

Conclusion

Emmaus Baptist Church was the religious hub of a farming community for just over a century. My pioneer ancestors in Muscogee County, my earliest ancestors to this county, were long-time members and officers of this church. It is to them that I dedicate the above article.

***All Roads Lead to Coweta:
A Center of Colonial Era International Diplomacy on the
Chattahoochee***

By Mike Bunn

Part One

Just south of downtown Columbus, where the rhythmic crashing of the Chattahoochee over the rock outcroppings of the fall line becomes a distant whisper and the river begins its final meandering journey to the sea, the river valley stretches out into a verdant expanse that has been a welcome host and home to generations of inhabitants from time immemorial. As it cut through this stretch of territory linking the rolling hills of the Piedmont and the rich level lands of the Coastal Plain, the timeless river in a not-too-distant previous era was flanked by a flourishing wilderness that teemed with an abundance of flora and fauna that modern visitors can only begin to comprehend. Cougars, bears, and buffalo once roamed these parts, sheltered in their roamings by a canopy of immense hardwoods and towering pines of which only traces remain. On a plain in a clearing in this dense forest along the river's western bank, framed by the surrounding hills that overlook this lush valley, once stood a thriving town that vibrated with activity and influence. Its residents and their visitors imbued upon it significance and a centrality to the pageant of Southeastern history of which far too few today have any real knowledge. The town was for generations a critical population, cultural, and trading center for a nation whose legacy only remains on the land. More than a longstanding capital, it became a destination for foreigners from across the sea and an epicenter of contact and exchange on a vast and dynamic frontier. Its name was Coweta.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ The commonly-accepted modern, Anglicized spelling of the name of the town is used in this essay. It was referred to by contemporaries as "Coweta," "Cowetuh," "Kawita," and other variants.



The location of Coweta (here labeled "Cowetas") is shown above the "O" in "Georgia", in this 1758 map of Georgia and the Carolinas by John Gibson and Emanuel Bowen. The unidentified river on which it lies is the Chattahoochee. Courtesy of the David Rumsey Map Collection.

To refer to Coweta with the word "town" likely conjures up modern images of urban settings so different from its reality that an explanation of its physical layout is necessary.⁵⁸ A Creek town, it by all accounts followed closely the layout of Creek towns in general, which means it consisted of dozens of small homesteads scattered over hundreds of acres that were bound together socially and organizationally. The physical manifestation of this community unity was a small governmental and cultural complex known as a "square ground." This public plaza functioned as the symbolic and literal heart of the community, and the place where all official business took place and important guests received. While we do not know precisely the exact size or layout of Coweta's square ground, we do know it would have been defined by four large wooden sheds, or cabins, oriented in the four cardinal directions and open toward the center. All male residents of the town would have been assigned to seats in one of these according to their age and rank in society, and occupied them as hosts, counsel, and judges depending on the occasion for gathering in this sacred space. Ceremonial fires in

⁵⁸ This description of Creek villages is informed by several works, but taken primarily from Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) and William W. Winn, *The Old Beloved Path: Daily Life Among the Indians of the Chattahoochee River Valley* (Eufaula: Historic Chattahoochee Commission, 1992).

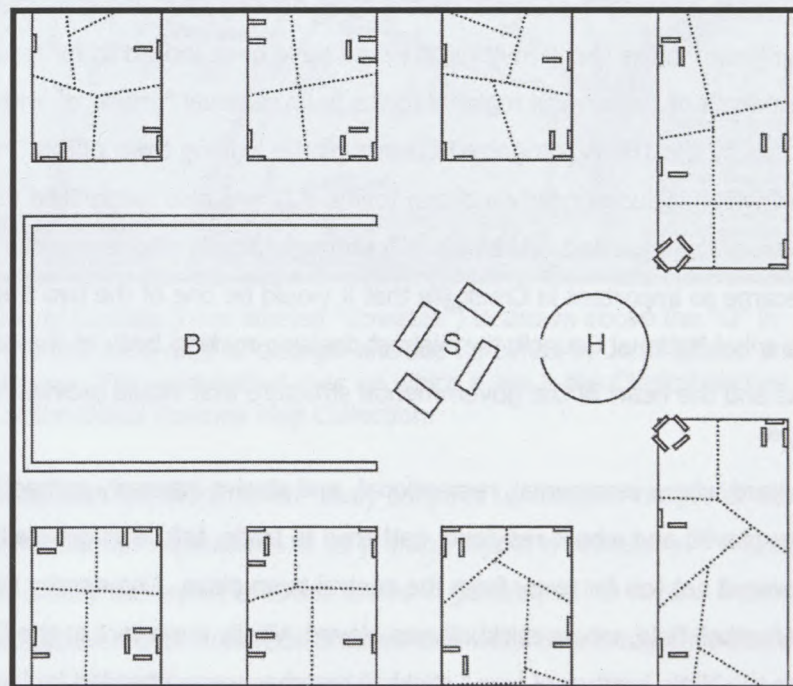
the heart of this plaza would have been kept burning at all times. Indeed, smoke from the many fires of households dotting the landscape would likely at times have been visible for miles and been the first sign visitors were approaching a population center. The square ground served as the receiving point of guests and the place where dances and other frequent celebrations occurred. Nearby or even adjacent to the plaza would have been a council house, a large circular building where dignitaries could gather in inclement weather and in which a number of other social functions of the town would have been held throughout the year. Certain village residents, such as elderly women, may have lived in this space at various times as well. It is important to note that depending upon the time of year in which one visited Coweta, the size and makeup of the residents one might encounter could have been significantly different. While most of the local population would have been present during the spring and summer growing season, during the hunting season most of the men and many adult women traveled the Creeks' vast domain hunting deer and processing skins for trade. A "red," or "war" town in the Creek mythos, it would have been looked to for leadership in times of conflict by residents of the several regional towns in its regional "province" with which it had strong ties. The Creeks by the 1680s recognized Coweta as the leading town of the "Province of Apalachicola," which included nearly a dozen towns.⁵⁹ It was also recognized to be a founding, or "mother," town of the tribe and esteemed as a primary cultural, economic, and governmental capital. The town became so important in Creek life that it would be one of the two traditional meeting places of the tribal National Council, the highest decision-making body of the combined Upper and Lower Creeks and the heart of the governmental structure that would provide structure to the Creek Confederacy.⁶⁰

A large yard where ceremonial, recreational, and always intensely competitive games such as chunkee were played and where residents gathered to trade, talk, and generally socialize, would have been located not too far away from the central town plaza. Also nearby sat a large field, about the size of a football field, where stickball was played. Vitally important to the Creeks and commonly referred to as the "little brother of war," stickball matches were attended by large crowds and on them were levied significant wagers of goods and healthy doses of community pride. Somewhere along the well-irrigated river bottom lands just a stone's throw away from the town square laid a series of communal gardens where vegetables that were staples of the Creek diet, such as corn, squash, and beans, were cultivated. Stretching for a few miles on both sides of the river were a series of "old fields," or cleared but fallow communal agricultural fields, that had been used until the fertility of the soil began to wane or abandoned when the villagers had moved away. Some of these

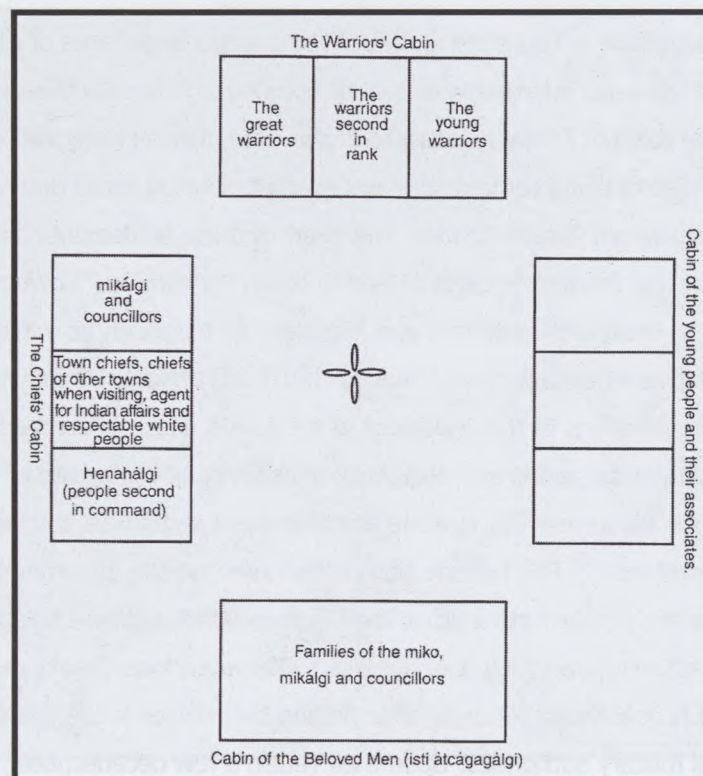
⁵⁹ Hahn, Steven C. Hahn, *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004): p. 37-38.

⁶⁰ The other town at which the National Council frequently met was the Upper Creek Town of Tuckaubatchee on the Tallapoosa River.

would have been vacant for many years and trees overtaken them. Far from an untouched, pristine wilderness, all around Coweta would have been signs of significant alteration of the land by human hands. While many trees would have been cleared for agriculture and construction of homes and public buildings, groves of nut-bearing native trees such as hickory and oak, also substantial parts of the Creek diet, would have been preserved nearby for communal use. Herd animals, such as cattle and hogs, and a number of horses and chickens would have been seen in and around the town. Several paths leading off to various points connected Coweta to the outside world by; most immediately other villages, hunting grounds, river systems, and further, to European settlements on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. In a very real sense, the town stood as a crossroads community for a large region of what is today Alabama and Georgia during a formative era in American history we know generically as the "colonial era."



This sketch of the layout of a typical Creek town, taken from H. Thomas Foster II's *Archaeology of the Lower Muskogee Creek Indians, 1715-1836*, is based on an engraving by Ephraim G. Squier. "B" is the ball field; "S" is the square ground, and "H" the council house.



Plan of a Creek square ground, based on Benjamin Hawkins description of Cusseta, ca. 1800, from *Archaeology of the Lower Muskogee Creek Indians, 1715-1836*, by H. Thomas Foster II

According to Creek legend, people who settled along the Chattahoochee after mystically emerging from the ground "in the west" founded the town. While this often-repeated legend may be based on an actual historic migration whose details have been forgotten and indicate the town literally began with the arrival of newcomers from an unspecified distant point, the exact origins of the first residents of Coweta, and whether or not they were a distinctly different people from those they would have encountered already living along the banks of the Chattahoochee if they were indeed immigrants, may forever remain clouded in mystery. There is evidence that Coweta's founders originally belonged to the town of Cusseta, which may have been at the time of Hernando De Soto's *entrada* located near the confluence of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers in central Alabama and later migrated eastward to the banks of the Chattahoochee.⁶¹ So far as is known, the earliest reference to the town of Coweta in European records occurs in 1674, which may indicate it was formed sometime around that time by new arrivals.⁶² Whether or not they were an offshoot from an existing nearby town and assimilated other people that might have already been there can only be speculated. Regardless of the route taken by the ancestors of the natives of the historic Creek town of Coweta,

⁶¹ Hahn, *The Invention of the Creek Nation* p. 26-29.

⁶² Ibid.

by the 1600s they would have had deep ancestral roots in the larger area of Alabama and Georgia that stretched back centuries prior to the arrival of Europeans in the Southeast.⁶³

Technically, the town of Coweta discussed in this essay was actually two separate settlements and dozens of affiliated outlying communities occupied at different times and spread over a wide area of what is now northeastern Russell County. The heart of these settlements lay between the Chattahoochee River and modern Brickyard Road in south Phenix City. "Coweta Tallahassee" (old Coweta), regarded by most archaeologists and historians as the older, or original, of the two, was the site of significant Native American communities for hundreds of years stretching back prior to the time of De Soto's explorations of the Southeast in the 1540s. There is archaeological evidence of a flourishing late Mississippian period and protohistoric ceremonial center site of the original town of Coweta, but this does not necessarily indicate a continuity of settlement by the highly mobile Native Americans of the Southeast.⁶⁴ This historic period town was the site of some of earliest contact between Europeans and Native Americans in the Chattahoochee Valley. Its residents apparently abandoned or at least temporarily left it in the late 1600s when local Creeks moved en masse eastward into what is now central Georgia after finding themselves in the crossfire between Spanish and English colonial military authorities. Upon their return a few decades later, they are believed to have established "New Coweta," a short distance upriver.⁶⁵ This town played a central town in the formation of the Creek Confederacy and served as a critical place of interaction between Creeks, Europeans, and Americans for the remainder of the colonial and early national periods up to Removal. As observers and the Creeks themselves assumed a great degree of continuity between the two settlements, for the sake of simplicity, in this essay events occurring before and after the brief migration to central Georgia will be referred to collectively as "Coweta."

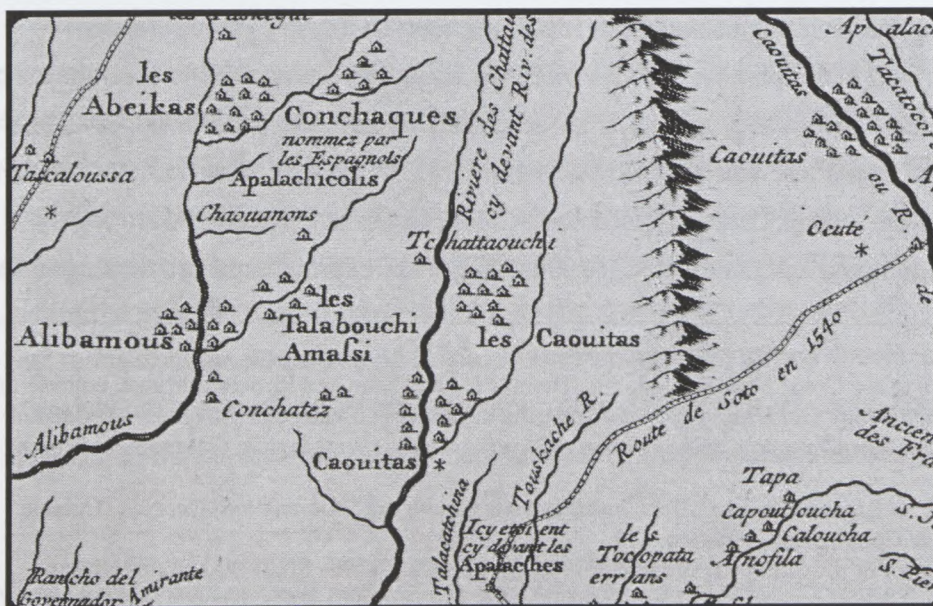
⁶³ The town would have a symbiotic relationship with the town of Cusseta, located on the opposite bank of the Chattahoochee in what is today Georgia, throughout its existence. While several of the visits by Europeans discussed below mention both towns, it was widely understood that Coweta had preeminence.

⁶⁴ The term "Mississippian Period" refers to the Native American societies that flourished shortly before the arrival of Europeans. The era is usually dated to between 1000 and 1550 A.D. "Protohistoric" refers to the era just immediately prior to written recorded history. In the Chattahoochee Valley, this would be ca. 1500-ca. 1600. While we do not know with certainty the nature of the ancestral connection, if any, between Mississippian mound-building societies along the Chattahoochee and historic period Creek towns, the Abercrombie Mound site may have been the forerunner of the historic period town of Coweta. Information taken from Columbus Museum Archeological Site Files.

⁶⁵ All the details of this migration are not known. It is widely believed that Creek desires to be more closely allied with the English and further removed from the front lines of the English-Spanish rivalry precipitated the move to central Georgia, and that the Yamassee War led to the return. The broad outlines of these moves are discussed below.



This remarkably detailed map of North America, printed in 1730 by the Dutch firm of Covens and Mortier, was produced by noted cartographer Guillaume de Lisle. The heart of Creek territory, and virtually all permanent Creek towns, lay along stretches of the Chattahoochee, Flint, Tallapoosa, Coosa and Alabama Rivers. At its height the Creek Nation claimed as part of its expansive domain land stretching north to south from modern day Tennessee to Florida, and west to east from central Alabama to the Atlantic Ocean.



(Inset)
Along the lower reaches of the Chattahoochee (at lower center) are two notations for a large area occupied by the "Caouitas."⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Courtesy of the David Rumsey Map Collection

Coweta burst onto the scene in the second half of the seventeenth century. It quickly began to assume importance as a regional population, economic, and cultural center as the Creek confederacy began to coalesce around that time. While all the reasons for this ascendancy cannot be outlined with precision because of how relatively little we know of the dynamics of early Creek society, most agree that the town owed its rise in large part to a combination of factors including a sophisticated network of political alliances and its strategic location at the intersection of expanding Spanish, English and French colonial empires.⁶⁷ Roads—really paths through the wilderness just wide enough to accommodate a pack mule at their widest in most cases—from St. Augustine, Charleston, and Fort Toulouse in what is now central Alabama, converged there. As colonial traders representing the interests of European powers began to reach out into the Southeastern interior from Florida, Carolina, and the Mississippi River Valley, respectively, the town became an obvious point of communication and trade. In both a literal and figurative sense, Coweta became a link between empires and civilizations, and a unique one at that. Though situated some 500 miles away from the centers of European colonial establishments along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, Coweta came to demarcate an inland frontier destined to play a significant role in the delicate balance of power among native groups and Europeans for nearly two centuries. According to noted Chattahoochee Valley historian Mark Fretwell, “for many years, Coweta was the converging point of all these varied interests. Paths led here from all three directions. It was the point of confrontation of all the ambitions, of international intrigue and diplomacy, this clay-packed square of an Indian town beside the river and the Council House adjoining.”⁶⁸

It may come as a surprise to many just how thoroughly Europeans were involved in the lives of Native Americans in this area as early as the second half of the seventeenth century.⁶⁹ After establishing a beachhead at St. Augustine in the 1500s, the Spanish began to move steadily westward and northward in the ensuing decades. Not long after, they learned of the Creek towns of the lower Chattahoochee River Valley and came to recognize their strategic importance. By the early 1680s, they had even built a fort near what is now Phenix City. The English, after finally establishing a lasting foothold on the Atlantic Coast at Charleston in 1670, began to move southward and westward into the Southern backcountry almost immediately in an effort to expand their burgeoning

⁶⁷ Hahn, *The Invention of the Creek Nation*, p. 13, 30; Thomas J. Pluckhahn and Robbie Ethridge, editors, *Light on the Path: The Anthropology and History of the Southeastern Indians* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), p. 77; John Reed Swanton, *Indian Tribes of North America* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1952), p. 165.

⁶⁸ Mark Fretwell, *This So Remote Frontier: The Chattahoochee Country of Alabama and Georgia* (Eufaula: Historic Chattahoochee Commission, 1980), p. 119.

⁶⁹ The colonial era history of the Southeast is covered in a host of books. Three of the best sources that specifically discuss the Chattahoochee Valley are Fretwell, *This So Remote Frontier*, Hahn, *The Invention of the Creek Nation*, and Verner Crane, *The Southern Frontier 1670-1732* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004).

trading network and simultaneously gain influence. Traders from Charleston are known to have been visiting Creek villages on the Chattahoochee by the 1680s and likely earlier. The French, last to enter the Valley's colonial scene, set themselves up on the Gulf Coast in 1699 in what is now Mississippi and soon after founded Mobile. They concentrated their efforts in that region and the Mississippi River Valley, to which they had a longstanding connection, before turning their attention eastward. Representatives serving under the flag of the fleur-de-lis offered overtures to Chattahoochee Valley residents by the second decade of the 1700s.

Europeans calculated these advances to help them build up a colonial empire, but they at the same time benefitted the Creeks. Colonial authorities could not afford to maintain standing armies throughout the vast region to which they laid claim, and early on they began endeavoring to secure the support of native groups to help them solidify the hegemony they sought. Through trading and military alliances, they could at once line their coffers, enlarge the effective fighting force of their small colonial militaries, and have the Indian nations themselves serve as buffers to territorial encroachment by rivals. Trade operated as the linchpin in this diplomacy.⁷⁰ Europeans discovered the Creeks had a real affinity for the manufactured goods they could provide; weapons, clothing, fabrics, jewelry, cooking ware, tools such as axes and hoes, and a host of other useful items that generally made daily life easier. In addition, foodstuffs such as salt, sugar, coffee, and liquor—especially rum—came to be prized commodities in frontier exchange. Depending on when and where the transaction took place, the Creeks paid for these goods with a number of products including cattle, hogs, herbs, hickory oil, and corn, but the predominant items of trade were deerskins. The lifeblood of the colonial backcountry economy, skins became a tangible form of currency in the era. Prepared skins were sent to Europe by the traders where they were made into a wide range of products including clothing, gloves, and book bindings. By the turn of the eighteenth century, the deerskin trade had become of paramount economic importance to the colonial empire of the English in the Southeast, especially. From the colony of Carolina alone between 1699 and 1705 were shipped to London over 45,000 deerskins annually.⁷¹ The situation must have appeared ideal for the Creeks early on, as the southeastern woodlands teemed with deer and they had an abundance of skill in hunting them. Quickly realizing the pecuniary value of their friendship to the newcomers, the Creeks early on sought to turn the situation to their advantage by playing one group's advances off the other to secure the best terms of trade. As long as no single European power was strong enough to impose its will on the entire region, the Creeks could play one group off the other as a sovereign equal. The Creek's approach to the new international landscape in which they found themselves abruptly cast as central

⁷⁰ The best chronicling of the development and details of this trade is found in Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

players ultimately evolved into a policy of intensely strained neutrality that allowed them to exploit European rivalries to the fullest advantage. From the beginning, however, Europeans who ventured to Creek cultural centers such as Coweta came as emissaries with "hat in hand," attempting to secure a measure of allegiance through mutually beneficial negotiation. Because the Creeks had no written language, it is primarily through the records of European suitors that Coweta's story as an international meeting place is understood today.

The earliest documented visits by Europeans to Coweta during the colonial era were by English traders operating out of Charleston, or "Charles Town" as it was then known. As the fledgling Carolina colony began to thrive, it rapidly became a hub of economic activity for the English and an anchor to their burgeoning southeastern North American empire. Though they dealt primarily with tribes with a presence in the immediate area of Carolina in the first years of the colony, they became aware of the town of Coweta and its potential strategic importance relatively early. Historians have found evidence of the arrival of English traders on the banks of the Chattahoochee as early as 1681, and some believe the town may have been the first in the Chattahoochee Valley region to trade directly with the English on the Atlantic Coast.⁷²

The arrival of a colorful character named Henry Woodward in 1685, though, truly put Coweta on the map as a place of international economic and political intrigue.⁷³ Woodward was a trader who had been in Carolina since its founding and was well versed in regional Indian culture and language by virtue of extensive travel. By some accounts, he may have been fluent in as many as five Indian languages.⁷⁴ Having heard of the wealth of the region through Indian contacts, colonial officials had asked him to explore the Southeastern backcountry and establish contact with the Creeks living along the Chattahoochee as early as the mid-1670s, possibly at the request of the Creeks themselves.⁷⁵ With contact through trade likely already well established, he arrived in Coweta in the summer of 1685 with an entourage of a few fellow English traders, several dozen Yamassee Indians serving as escort and guide, and a large supply of trade goods.⁷⁶ His goal was simple—to secure a formal economic relationship with one of the most important of the Creek towns.

Woodward and his entourage would have likely been met many miles out on the road to Coweta and brought into the town as distinguished guests, and the entire party probably received in the

⁷² Joseph Norman Heard, *Handbook of the American Frontier Four Centuries of Indian-White Relationships, Vol. 1: The Southeastern Woodlands* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1987), p. 116; Swanton, *Indian Tribes of North America*, p. 228; Pluckhahn and Ethridge, *Light on the Path*, p. 77.

⁷³ There is evidence Woodward may have known of Coweta as early as 1674. Ibid., p. 76; Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, p. 26.

⁷⁴ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, p. 26.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.; Herbert E. Bolton and Mary Ross, *The Debatable Land: A Sketch of the Anglo-Spanish Contest for the Georgia Country* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1925), p. 48; Paul Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement: Biological Catastrophe in the Native Southeast, 1492-1715* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), p. 134.

ancient square ground. Salutations and gifts would then have been exchanged, an elaborate meal partaken of, and the peace pipe passed around as dances were performed long before any formal business could be transacted. Accounts of the negotiations between Woodward and the town "mico," or chief, are lacking.⁷⁷ If Woodward's visit played out as did other European sojourns in Coweta, the talks likely occurred over many days, and involved a series of discussions and ceremonies. Woodward no doubt traded some of his carefully-selected manufactured goods for a quantity of deerskins at some point during his stay, and entered into rounds of talks with headmen regarding the business arrangement he proposed. He must have been persuasive and ultimately successful, for the Creek leaders gave their assent to the construction of a palisaded blockhouse nearby that could be used as a sort of warehouse in support of the trade arrangement.⁷⁸ There are even some reports that the Coweta chief even offered a niece to Woodward as a bride to cement the alliance, but the truth of this may be impossible to verify.⁷⁹ The budding cozy relationship would ultimately influence the course of Southeastern history in many ways, the most immediate being that it was at the moment in the eyes of the Spanish an egregious affront to their proclaimed sovereignty in the region and required immediate action.

Headquartered in St. Augustine, Spanish colonial officials had first become interested in what they referred to as the "province of Apalachicola," which included much of the lower Chattahoochee Valley, in the mid-1670's. In 1675 Gabriel Diaz Vara Calderon produced what is believed to be the first list of Creek towns along the lower Chattahoochee in a letter to the Queen of Spain addressing the progress of missionaries in the area, indicating some level of familiarity already existed.⁸⁰ As the Chattahoochee Valley fell within the broader region claimed by the Spanish as part of their colonial dominion and was becoming a sort of frontier area where English and Spanish claims intersected, they soon began efforts to bring the area's natives under their sway in earnest. In 1675, they established a mission at the junction of the Flint and Chattahoochee known as Santa Cruz de Sabacola el Menor. In 1679, Father Juan Ocon and two assistants from the San Luis mission near modern Tallahassee landed at the village of Sabacola, believed to have been just north of modern Eufaula, attempting to establish a mission that might serve as the next bulwark in the steady Spanish advance northward from Florida. The Spaniards soon learned their efforts had gotten off to a rather inauspicious start owing to the fact that they had not secured the permission of the chief of Coweta for the venture. Claiming dominion over the area, the chief appeared within a matter of days at

⁷⁷ The English referred to the chief as the "Grand Cacique." This was likely a word introduced to their lexicon by accounts of encounters with native groups by Spanish explorers of the Caribbean and mainland North America. Fretwell, *This So Remote Frontier*, p. 91.

⁷⁸ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, p. 26; Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, p. 28.

⁷⁹ Hahn, p. 26.

⁸⁰ Mark E. Fretwell, "Two Early Letters from Alabama," *Alabama Review* 9 (January, 1956): 354-365.

Sabacola and angrily forced the Spaniards to leave.⁸¹ Coweta was at that time allied with the powerful Westos living along the Savannah River, who enjoyed a virtual monopoly on trade with the developing colony of Carolina.⁸² The Westos, originally from the Northeast, supplied the European settlers with Indian slaves they captured, and in return obtained quantities of valued manufactured goods, including firearms, far in advance of most other tribes in the region. The Coweta chief likely carried in his rebuke the implied threat of Westo firepower to oust the Spanish missionaries. The exchange is regarded by some as marking a shift in Coweta's growing power and the event that marked its ascendancy to a position of preeminence in the eyes of colonial authorities.⁸³

Spanish designs on the lower Creeks had been temporarily aided by the breaking of Westo power in the Westo War of 1680 between the tribe and the English in Carolina. Although they had befriended the Westos at the founding of their colony due to its relatively weak position, the English there had gradually come to see them as a barrier to the expansion of their trading network. Through the combined efforts of ruffians and allied Savannah Indians, they attacked and virtually destroyed the tribe in short order. Some of the few Westo survivors fled to the safety of Creek towns, and it is believed that their tales of English atrocities made the Cowetas fear the English and consequently move to try to patch things up with the Spanish.⁸⁴ If the Cowetas did have any apprehensions about dealing with the English, however, they were apparently assuaged by the time Henry Woodward and his band of traders arrived.

In seeking to extend the hand of economic friendship simultaneously to both England and Spain, though, Coweta found itself in the middle of a rivalry that would ultimately have severe ramifications on the Creeks in general and the town immediately. Spanish authorities acted quickly and decisively to Woodward's "trespassing" by dispatching approximately 250 soldiers and Apalachee warriors from San Luis under the command of Antonio Matheos to arrest the Englishmen.⁸⁵ Unfortunately for the Spanish, Creeks friendly to Woodward alerted him of their approach by and he either departed or hid. He left a sarcastic note for his would-be captors at Coweta, however:

"I regret it very much that I have come with so small a company that I cannot await the arrival of Your Grace, but be it known to you that I came to get acquainted with this land, its mountains, the seacoast and Apalache. I trust in God that I shall meet Your Grace when I have a larger Company. September 2, 1685. Vale!"⁸⁶

⁸¹ Ibid., Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 33-34.

⁸² The best and most recent study of the Westos is Eric E. Browne's *The Westo Indians: Slave Traders of the Early Colonial South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 2005).

⁸³ Hahn, *Invention of the Creek Nation*, p. 26, Pluckhahn and Ethridge, *Light on the Path*, p. 77.

⁸⁴ Hahn, p. 26. For information on the Westo War, see Browne, *The Westo Indians*.

⁸⁵ Ibid.; Fretwell, *This So Remote Frontier*, p. 91; Heard, *Handbook of the American Frontier*, p. 116.

⁸⁶ Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, p. 35.

Unable to locate the brash English "invaders," the frustrated Spanish army contented itself with burning to the ground the uncompleted warehouse the Creeks had agreed to allow constructed.⁸⁷

No sooner than the Spanish had left than Woodward and his cohorts returned to the banks of the Chattahoochee, though. Hearing that the intruders had reappeared almost before their army had arrived back in Florida, Matheos determined to return to finish what he had left undone and paid Coweta a second visit in January of 1686.⁸⁸ But the Englishmen, tipped off to his approach, once again proved elusive. Exasperated and blaming the stubborn locals who continued entertain the English for the situation, Matheos requested the understandably alarmed headmen of area Creek towns to assemble at Coweta. Having displayed a little military might, he endeavored to solicit from them a firm promise under veiled threat that they would not allow such English intrusions into the area in the future. Several appeared and agreed to the request affirming Spanish hegemony, likely simply out of fear of Spanish military reprisal. Four, including Coweta and its sister town Cusseta, equivocated. Matheos seized the trade goods he found, including an estimated 500 deerskins, burned a stockade the Creeks had allowed Woodward to build nearby, and ordered the burning of Coweta and the three other allied towns.⁸⁹ Composed mostly of wood and thatch, the village houses and public structures would have likely gone up in flames quickly. The hardship this would have caused residents of Coweta can well be imagined, but the emotional toll of seeing your hometown destroyed in such a manner defies words. Despite this, the ashes from the destructive fire were still warm when Woodward emerged from hiding yet again. Unswayed from their resolve to make alliances of their choosing and apparently holding no ill will towards Woodward, the residents of Coweta welcomed back the English traders. Soon after, though, Woodward became seriously ill. According to tradition, several dozen Creeks literally carried the ailing trader back to Charles Town on a litter.⁹⁰ He never returned. With his departure closed a formative chapter in Coweta's diplomatic history that saw an emboldened Coweta flex some of its newfound and growing political and economic clout within the Creek Confederacy to begin mapping out a savvy strategy of self-determination that would admit allegiance to no European power. But the English-Spanish confrontation for influence at Coweta was

⁸⁷ Ibid.; Bolton and Ross, *The Debatable Land*, p. 51..

⁸⁸ Hahn, *The Invention of the Creek Nation*, p. 26; Lynn Willoughby, *Flowing Through Time: A History of the Lower Chattahoochee River* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), p. 21.

⁸⁹ Fretwell, *This So Remote Frontier*, p. 91; Willoughby, *Flowing Through Time*, p. 21; Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, p. 134, Bolton and Ross, *The Debatable Land*, p. 51. The other towns that refused to comply with Spanish wishes, and were consequently burned, were Cusseta, Tuskegee, and Colone.

⁹⁰ Fretwell, p. 91.

just beginning, as other traders, seeking to exploit the connections Woodward had been so instrumental in establishing, would pick up where he left off.⁹¹

TO BE CONTINUED

⁹¹ Crane, *The Southern Frontier*, 33-34; Fretwell, *This So Remote Frontier*, p. 91.

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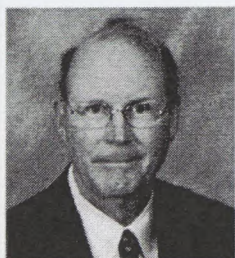
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